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The Eternal Genocide

Amnesty International's most recent self-described "landmark" report concludes that Israel is committing genocide against the Palestinians in Gaza.

By Kathleen Hayes

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With the inevitability of winter succeeding fall, Amnesty International's most recent self-described "landmark" report concludes that Israel is committing genocide against the Palestinians in Gaza. As Tablet Magazine's The Scroll comments, Amnesty's conclusion may be shocking only "to one or two people still laboring under the belief that words mean things."

Amnesty's stance is established in the very first line of its report. "On 7 October 2023, Israel embarked on a military offensive on the occupied Gaza Strip (Gaza) of unprecedented magnitude, scale and duration," they inform the reader, the worst one-day slaughter of Jews since the Holocaust, in their own country, not being worth a mention. To be sure, after exhaustively detailing Israel's alleged war crimes, they do mention that on the above morning, Hamas and other armed groups attacked Israeli "civilian and military targets." (Palestinians are men, women and children; Israelis are "targets.") But the report's prevailing tale is of war-crazed Zionists on a rampage, slaughtering Palestinian babies for the sheer pleasure of it.

Never mind that the casualty statistics cited by the Hamas-controlled Gaza Ministry of Health are trustworthy only to those who believe in the tooth fairy; and that their figure doesn't even claim to include the 17,000 or so terrorists the IDF believes have been killed; and that despite the Gazan people's undeniable suffering and deaths in the war, its population actually increased 2% in 2024 according to the CIA World Factbook; and that many of the Palestinians killed would be alive today if Hamas didn't position themselves in and under schools, mosques and hospitals; and that Israel has taken steps to minimize civilian casualties which are unprecedented in warfare — ignore all that, and the inconvenient fact still remains that international law defines "genocide" as the "intentional destruction of a national, ethnic, racial, or religious group, in whole or in part." It does not apply to people killed, however tragically, as the inevitable consequence of war.

Amnesty gets around this by determining, like Humpty Dumpty, that words mean what they choose them to mean. They pronounce the previous, universally established and accepted legal definition "overly cramped," as if complaining about a hotel room. This standard interpretation of international jurisprudence "would

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conflict." They prefer to redefine "genocide" to mean "whatever the Jews are doing."

It apparently occurs to no one in Amnesty to ask: What kind of "genocide" is it when the victimized population steadily increases, year after year, over the course of more than half a century? Because the "genocide" charge against Israel has been made, at regular intervals, for nearly 60 years. It originated in the Soviet Union, the progressive world's onetime beloved homeland. The "genocide!" cry rose from the Soviet media in the summer of 1967, after Israel committed the crime of defeating the Soviet Union's Arab client states. Israeli Defense Minister Moshe Dayan was declared a "pupil of Hitler" and world Zionism a racist, criminal conspiracy. Soviet pseudo-historians and other ideologues generated what late historian Robert Wistrich called "a tsunami" of shrill anti-Zionist propaganda and aimed it at the West.

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American and European leftists in thrall to the Soviet Union — even those who said they hated the regime in the Kremlin — couldn't write newspaper articles, placards and speeches with the new party line fast enough. They declared Zionism the greatest evil on the planet and Israel the perpetrator of the bloodiest crimes in history. Eventually, their stenciled placards grew weather-beaten and yellowed and had to be replaced. Otherwise, the generation of 1967 could have bequeathed those perennially fashionable "Zionism=Genocide" signs to their children, grandchildren and, soon, great-grandchildren to use in protests against Israel.

The "genocide" accusation would quiet for a while, to reemerge anytime Israel acted to defend itself. The 1982 war in Lebanon inspired a new spree of "genocide" charges from East Germany, that bulwark of freedom, and countless Western leftist groups including the Trotskyist organization I once belonged to. The Soviet Union's collapse did nothing to stem the anti-Zionism Moscow had propagated; if anything, Western leftists consoled themselves for the death of communism by deeming Palestinianism the next righteous cause. The pupils carried on without the master. They condemned Zionism with the fervor of a Pravda editorial, becoming increasingly frenzied with the post-9/11 wars against jihadism.

It really should have occurred to some of those denouncing Israel's "genocide" — year after year, decade after decade — that something about this eternal, oddly ineffectual genocide doesn't add up. And yet

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every time they raise their voices in outrage, it just "feels true" that Israel is committing genocide — just as throughout history, millions of people thought it "feels true" that Jews were murdering Christian children, poisoning wells, plotting global conquest, contaminating Aryan blood, bringing down capitalism, and controlling world capitalism.

Amnesty is smugly certain they're on the "right side of history." But if they knew anything about history, they'd see how they're dealers in the libel that never dies.

I'm sure — I'm fairly certain — Amnesty's supporters would, if pressed, condemn the recent synagogue burning in Australia, the public parks defaced with swastikas, the ongoing physical assaults on Jews on Western city streets. As good liberals, I imagine they disapprove of physical violence against religious minorities. But by declaring Israel a nation of genocidal baby-killers for defending itself — against a group actually openly committed to genocide, which actually killed babies, children, men and women for the sheer pleasure of it and boasted about their deeds — they guarantee that others will act on their message. To an ever-growing number of people, Israel, and the demonic group known as "Zionists," and anyone who seems like they might be Jewish, is a legitimate "target." Amnesty is smugly certain they're on the "right side of history." But if they knew anything about history, they'd see how they're dealers in the libel that never dies.

Kathleen Hayes *is the author of "Antisemitism and the Left: A Memoir."*

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